



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS  
2000 NAVY PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20350-2000

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IN REPLY REFER TO

Ser N977/03046

25 Feb 03

Dear Colleagues,

Last week, I walked a few yards down the hall from my office and talked face to face with several dozen command chaplains and senior RPs meeting in Millington, Tennessee. The wonder of video-teleconferencing put a day back in my schedule and the price of a round trip ticket back in my TAD budget.

Last night, the History Channel aired a program about the 1991 Gulf War that showed how hundreds of thousands of our troops were able to race across miles of trackless desert to wreck the Iraqi army. The wonder of the Global Positioning System saved the lives on many Americans on the battlefield and prevented a long and costly confrontation with the enemy.

We are awash in technology these days, and each day brings new developments that push the envelope still further for what we can do. The benefits of this technological boom are transforming many aspects of religious ministry in the Sea Services.

The Chaplain Resource Branch has distributed an Operational Ministry CD with more useful material on it than everything I received when I went through the Chaplains School—both times. The Chaplains School itself has changed since I went through: a state-of-the-art VTC system has been installed in the same classroom where I learned to produce overhead transparencies. The RP "A" School curriculum is undergoing a significant technology infusion as I write. Many of you now deployed with units in and around the Persian Gulf take with you religious ministry technologies your predecessors in the last war could not have imagined.

The benefits of technology are largely dependent on one's ability to understand and use that technology effectively. I am pleased to see that more and more chaplains and RPs are taking advantage of new technologies as they become available. But I offer a word of caution and encouragement. For us chaplains and RPs, technology is a tool; it is not the goal or purpose of our

presence in our commands. By all means, take advantage of every new resource that comes your way, but remember that the value of every new resource is measured in how well it helps you tell the old, old story of God's love and grace poured out on his people.

One of our Washington newspapers ran a wonderful picture on the front page this week. In the picture, one of our Navy chaplains is baptizing a Marine lance corporal somewhere out in the desert in a very low-tech baptistry of plastic and sand bags. Many of you are having the same kind of impact. Technology enhances our safety and efficiency, and we should embrace it and use it well. But what happens in the baptistries and the Bible studies, in the prayer meetings and the pastoral counseling is of more benefit to our people than all the wonder modern technology holds. Keep up the good work; I am praying for you everyday.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barry C. Black". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

BARRY C. BLACK  
Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy  
Chief of Chaplains